

Testimony of Debbie Gross, Paraprofessional  
New Britain Public Schools

**HB 5465 An Act Concerning Family Medical Leave Benefits for  
Certain Municipal Employees**

Labor and Public Employees Committee  
February 10, 2011

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski and members of the Labor Committee. My name is Debbie Gross and I am a Special Education Inclusion Paraprofessional in New Britain. I work with first graders that have special needs such as autism, learning disabilities, and social emotional and behavioral problems. I work directly with the regular education classroom teacher and the special education resource teacher.

I was diagnosed with a chronic neuro/muscular disease about 11 years ago. I have severe pain and numbness all over my body. Some days it takes everything to just get out of bed in the morning. I am in the care of a pain management doctor, which I see on a monthly basis. I am on several medications to help reduce the pain, numbness, and emotional drain of my disease.

I worry every time I need to take a sick day due to my illness if I am going to lose my job. Not being able to have FMLA makes me more depressed and anxious which causes more pain and stress to my body.

I do not want to stop working because I love working with children and I am good at what I do. I make a difference in children's lives.

I have been working in education for over 20 years. If I were to lose my job due to the fact that paraprofessionals do not have FMLA, I don't know of any other job that I would be skilled to do.

We work hard and are dedicated to helping children. We deserve the opportunity to be part of FMLA!

Thank you.